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SENSITIVE
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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR
WILLIAMS/SHAMPAINE/STEINGER; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS;
TREASURY FOR SZUBIN/LOEFFLER/NUGENT/HIRSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2026
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: PROPOSED FIFTH MINARET RENEWS DEBATE OVER
CONSTRUCTION OF A SYNAGOGUE ON THE HARAM A-SHARIF/TEMPLE
MOUNT

CLASSIFIED BY: CONSUL GENERAL JAKE WALLES, PER REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: A JORDANIAN PROPOSAL TO BUILD A FIFTH MINARET FOR THE AL AQSA MOSQUE ON OF THE HARAM A-SHARIF/TEMPLE MOUNT HAS RENEWED CALLS BY RIGHT-WING ISRAELIS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SYNAGOGUE IN THE SAME AREA. JORDANIAN KING ABDULLAH ANNOUNCED A CONTEST FOR THE DESIGN OF THE MINARET IN OCTOBER AND ISSUED A TENDER FOR THE CONSTRUCTION. MEDIA REPORTS SAID ISRAELI MK URI ARIEL (NU-NRP) SUBSEQUENTLY CALLED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SYNAGOGUE IN THE SAME GENERAL AREA, THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF THE HARAM A-SHARIF/TEMPLE MOUNT AREA. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT CONSTRUCTION OF EITHER IS UNLIKELY. END SUMMARY.

"A HOPE OF THE KING"

12. (C) JORDANIAN KING ABDULLAH ANNOUNCED IN EARLY OCTOBER A CONTEST FOR THE DESIGN OF A FIFTH MINARET FOR THE AL AQSA MOSQUE, TO BE NAMED FOR HIS LATE FATHER, KING HUSSEIN. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE MINARET, AT 42 METERS IN HEIGHT, WOULD BE THE TALLEST OF THE MINARETS AT AL AQSA AND WOULD COST BETWEEN 4-500,000 JORDANIAN DINARS. THE MINARET WOULD BE CONSTRUCTED IN THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF THE HARAM A-SHARIF/TEMPLE MOUNT AREA JUST ABOVE THE AL-MARWANI MOSQUE. IF CONSTRUCTED, THE MINARET WOULD BE THE FIRST TO BE BUILT ON THE SITE IN MORE THAN 600 YEARS. ADNAN HUSSENI, DIRECTOR OF THE ISLAMIC WAQF, WHICH ADMINISTERS THE AL AQSA MOSQUE, TOLD CONGEN POLOFF HE DID NOT KNOW IF THE FIFTH MINARET WOULD BE BUILT AND THAT HE HAD NO INFORMATION ON THE FUNDING FOR THE PROJECT BEYOND MEDIA REPORTS. HE SPECULATED THAT THE MINARET IS "JUST A HOPE OF THE KING."

A "CULTURAL INTIFADA"

13. (C) ACCORDING TO MEDIA REPORTS, MK URI ARIEL OF THE NATIONAL UNION-NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY WILL PRESENT PLANS FOR A SYNAGOGUE ON THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF THE HARAM A-SHARIF/TEMPLE MOUNT AREA IN RESPONSE TO THE PLANNED CONSTRUCTION OF THE MINARET. DR. GABI BARKAI, AN ARCHAEOLOGIST WITH BAR ILAN UNIVERSITY AND THE HEAD OF THE COMMITTEE AGAINST DESTRUCTION OF ANTIQUITIES ON THE HARAM A-SHARIF/TEMPLE MOUNT, TOLD CONGEN POLOFF THAT THE PLAN TO CONSTRUCT A SYNAGOGUE IS "WISHFUL THINKING." HE DESCRIBED ARIEL'S PROPOSAL AS THE LATEST OF MANY SUCH PLANS, NONE OF WHICH HE THINKS ARE REALISTIC.

14. (C) DR. YITZHAK REITER, A SENIOR FELLOW WITH THE JERUSALEM INSTITUTE FOR ISRAEL STUDIES AND A PROFESSOR OF MIDDLE

EASTERN AND ISLAMIC STUDIES AT HEBREW UNIVERSITY, TOLD CONGEN POLOFF THAT "JEWISH EXTREMIST GROUPS" ARE ENCOURAGING PLANS FOR A SYNAGOGUE ON THE HARAM A-SHARIF/TEMPLE MOUNT. HE ALSO SAID HE DOUBTED THE SYNAGOGUE WOULD BE CONSTRUCTED. REITER ADDED THAT NEITHER A NEW SYNAGOGUE NOR A FIFTH MINARET SHOULD BE CONSTRUCTED IN "SUCH A DELICATE PLACE," AND SAID "EVERY MINOR CHANGE COULD LEAD TO A CATASTROPHE."

TESTING THE STATUS QUO

15. (C) COMMENT: ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS EACH ACCUSE THE OTHER SIDE OF DAMAGING THE AREA. WAQF DIRECTOR HUSSENI CLAIMS THE EXCAVATIONS OF THE HASMONIAN TUNNEL PARALLEL TO THE WESTERN WALL HAVE RESULTED IN CRACKS IN THE AL AQSA MOSQUE, WHILE BAR ILAN ARCHEOLOGIST BARKAI SAYS THE EXCAVATION OF DIRT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE AL-MARWANI MOSQUE DESTROYED ARTIFACTS FROM EARLIER PERIODS. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT EITHER THE MINARET OR THE SYNAGOGUE WILL BE CONSTRUCTED ON THE SITE. BOTH PLANS REFLECT POSTURING IN THE STRUGGLE OVER CULTURAL OWNERSHIP OF THE HARAM A-SHARIF/TEMPLE MOUNT. END COMMENT.

WALLES